EMS/ISO 14001 Delivers Positive Results to A.P. Technoglass Company

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2001 Winter BottomLine Vol. 13 No.4

A.P. Technoglass Company in Elizabethtown, Kentucky manufactures automotive glass for major automotive manufacturers. A.P. Technoglass is QS 9000-registered and was among the first twenty companies in Kentucky to register ISO 14001 in December 1999, well before OEM- specified deadlines.

During a recent interview, Walt Casey, Environmental Facilitator, shared his experiences implementing an EMS and the positive impact it had on the company.

"A successful EMS is dependant upon the involvement of the entire plant. The EMS offered our company an opportunity to reduce environmental costs, help the environment and increase our bottomline. Our company really supported EMS. They simply needed the resources and know-how."

The driving reason for A.P. Technoglass achieving certification was to support their customers at the lowest cost possible, but Casey revealed the level of employee environmental awareness and EMS participation became one of the many unanticipated benefits. Says Casey, "A.P. has always had the procedures and guidelines in place to help with environmental compliance and our employees were familiar with them, but implementing an EMS really increased environmental awareness at all levels throughout the plant. People understand why we're doing what we are for the environment and the positive financial impact it can have for the company."

Casey's insight shows how important a combination of good interpersonal and technical skill is in implementing an EMS. Initial communication to employees at every level is critical, thus Casey held a 1-hour EMS overview training session for all A.P. Technoglass employees. During the session, employees were given important information regarding EMS, the company's reason for implementing an EMS and a review of regulation impacting the company. Casey pointed out subsequent training would provide instruction on area-specific work instructions and procedures.

Casey vigorously began carrying out the task of setting up an EMS. "Environmental managers really need to financially justify their position to everyone in the plant. I see the EMS as a way to help do this. Most of the EMS cost was employee time," Casey says. Casey points to several key efforts that have reduced waste at the plant and saved money. Earliest among these changes, A.P. Technoglass switched from disposing of reusable cleanup rags, a hazardous waste, to dry cleaning and reusing the rags. This saved the company $36,000/year and changed A.P. Technoglass from a large quantity

hazardous generator to a small quantity generator. Casey not only likes the dollar savings for the company, but the reduction in regulatory burden.

The maintenance and engineering department initiated a second project by changing the lenses in the plant ceiling lights. With this modification, they realized they could adequately light the plant using only every other light, annually saving the company $42,000 in electrical utility bills.

There was also opportunity to reduce solid waste at the plant, because incoming raw glass from one supplier came shrink-wrapped, with a plastic dust cover and steel-banded, wooden toe boards, and with cardboard corner protectors. This packaging generated a tremendous volume of solid waste that went straight to the landfill. "This simply didn't make sense. The supplier pays their people to put all the packaging on, we pay ours to take it off and we pay to dispose of it at a landfill." says Casey. "At first the supplier wasn't receptive to changing its packaging, but my top management really backed me on this and all of us sat down and worked out a solution. It was a real "win-win" for the both of us. We agreed to reduce the packaging to all reusable and recyclable materials which equated to a large dollar savings that caught everyone's attention."

Casey represented A.P. Technoglass in KPPC's earliest Louisville EMS Alliance in 1998. The Alliance is an industry-oriented set of four workshops in which Alliance members learn how to set up an EMS from Ford, Toyota, and Hitachi mentors who have achieved ISO 14001 registration. Casey particularly credits these companies for their help, because they took time to show him their EMS manuals, documentation and additional key pointers.

Available and internal resources were used for A.P. Technoglass' EMS. They had experience in QS 9000. "The documentation from QS 9000 was tremendously helpful in setting up our ISO 14001 EMS. Use what you have at your facility. It simply doesn't make sense to reinvent a whole new system," says Casey. "Make the EMS work with what you have in place at your plant."

Casey now leads EMS implementation at A.P. Technoglass' sister facilities and offers to talk to other companies implementing their systems. Casey says, "When you first start an EMS, it looks overwhelming, but in hindsight, it's pretty straightforward with the right help."